

A newsletter of unusual reports on various subjects. Published on an irregular schedule as an exchange publication only with others of a like nature. Comments should be sent to: Gene Duplantier, 17 Shetland Street, Willowdale, Ontario, Canada M2M 1X5

Black holes: 'I'd bet my car on them'

Galaxies' secrets revealed at Toronto meeting

BY JOSEPH HALL
SCIENCE REPORTER

Scientists have found new evidence that massive black holes millions or billions of times the mass of our sun exist at the centre of most galaxies, a meeting of the American Astronomical Society was told in Toronto yesterday.

The findings, along with others announced during the conference's first day of sessions, are convincing evidence of the light-sucking, pure gravity cosmic phenomena, astronomers say.

"I wouldn't bet everything I have (that they exist), I might not even bet my house, but I'd bet my car and it's a pretty good car," said University of Michigan astronomer Douglas Richstone, whose team discovered evidence for the massive, central galaxy holes.

"By the fact that we're saying this, we are also staking our professional reputations on it."

Richstone says the black holes, like those found by his team, may have provided a seed for most galaxy formations —

including that of our own Milky Way — and are the likely power source for the universe's oldest and most luminous observable creatures, the quasars.

"We believe that most nearby galaxies show evidence of super massive black holes in their centres," Richstone said.

"And it is likely that most or all galaxies have massive or super massive black holes in their centres."

Based on Einstein's general relativity equations, black holes were first postulated in the late 1930s and have been among the most controversial of subjects for many astronomers since.

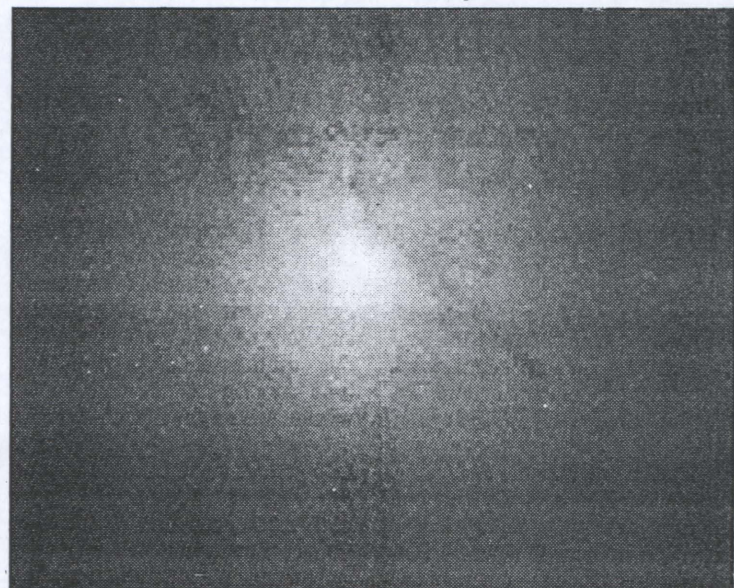
LIGHT CAN'T ESCAPE

Infinitesimally small specks of pure mass, the holes are thought to have a gravitational pull far greater than our own sun — so great that even light cannot escape their grasp.

Most are thought to be much less massive than the ones Richstone's team describes and are assumed to have been formed by large stars collapsing on themselves.

Richstone's black holes, however, were probably the result of vast amounts of star-forming cosmic dust condensing together as the very galaxies themselves were being born.

And the universe's quasars,



KARL GEBHARDT / UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

COSMIC POWER: The galaxy NGC 3379 is believed to contain super massive black holes. Astronomers say new findings make it almost certain they exist.

which are a trillion times more luminous than our sun, are thought to have been fuelled by material being sucked into these black holes and radiating under the stupendous temperatures produced in the process.

Currently found only in galaxies billions of light years from Earth, quasars were thought to have been 1,000 times more prevalent when the universe was only 10 to 20 per cent of its current age.

And the centre-galaxy black holes detected by Richstone and his colleagues, using the Hubble Space Telescope and some of its earthbound counterparts, are thought to be the fossils of quasars that have run out of enough nearby material to fuel their magnificent flames.

"The black hole doesn't go away even if the quasar dies off," said team member Scott Tremaine, of the University of

Toronto's Canadian Institute for Theoretical Astrophysics.

"Black holes can't disappear. All they can do is grow larger and that must mean, if our theories are correct, that many nearby galaxies which otherwise appear completely normal contain these super massive black holes millions or billions of times the mass of the sun."

Richstone's team found their black holes by using spectral analysis of stars moving around the centre of some 14 nearby galaxies.

The team showed that these stars were being propelled like marbles in a funnel towards the centre of the black holes.

TORONTO STAR Tuesday, January 14, 1997

No close encounters but lots of UFO hype

THE TORONTO STAR Saturday, November 16, 1996

By MITCHELL SMYTH
TRAVEL EDITOR

RACHEL, Nev.

IT WAS, I THOUGHT, a Close Encounter of the First Kind. There in the night sky over Area 51 — a place that officially doesn't exist — a bright, round light appeared. It hovered for a while, then suddenly went out.

"A flying saucer?" I asked my companion, UFO "expert" Chuck Clark.

"Naw. Just a flare, dropped to light the way for a bombing run," said Clark. "Look, there's another one. Now wait for the flash, like lightning, when they drop the bomb."

Sure enough, the flash came from over the horizon a couple of seconds later. But no sound. "That's because they're 50 or 60 miles away," said Clark.

A Close Encounter of the First Kind, you should know, means a sighting of a UFO. The Second Kind means seeing physical evidence, maybe tracks or burn marks where a saucer landed, or experiencing interference with power sources such as a car's ignition.

But it was the Third Kind I was most interested in, and Area 51 is the place to be to investigate it.

A Close Encounter of the Third Kind is where you actually meet the aliens and/or see their space ship up close. And I'd heard that Area 51, a huge, top-secret installation in the wilderness of central Nevada, is where the U.S. military is re-creating flying saucers from wreckage of crashed extraterrestrial craft.

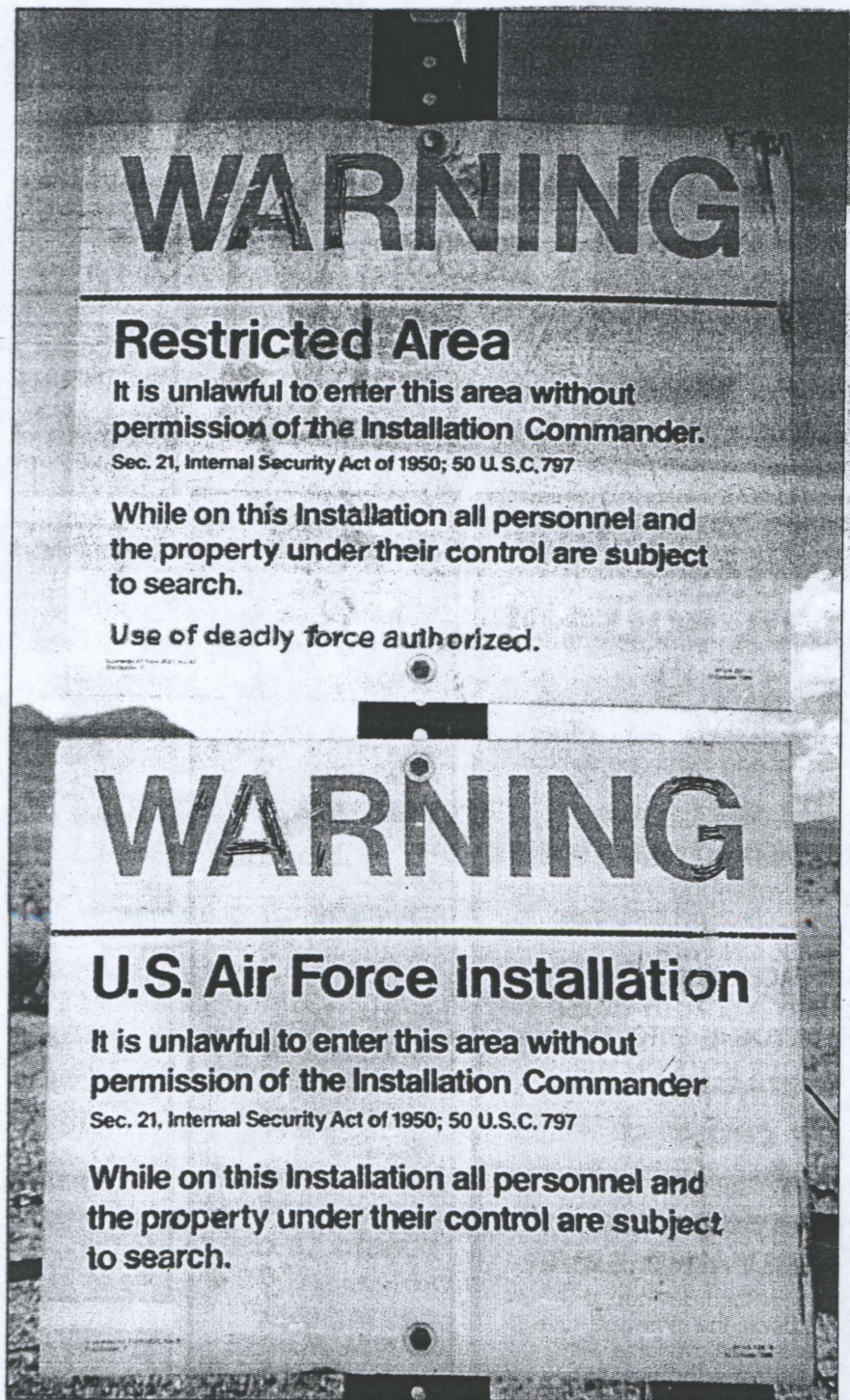
Not only that, there are those who say that the bodies of space aliens, little gray men recovered from the crash of a flying saucer in Roswell, N.M., in 1947, are preserved in a morgue in a tunnel-city — like something out of a James Bond movie — deep in the earth below Area 51.

Pentagon officials, predictably, deny all this, even deny that Area 51 exists, although they admit there's a bomb and gunnery range around here. Maybe, I thought, I should go in and have a look.

So, the morning after my non-close encounter saw me driving up a gravel road — it's not signed so you have to ask the locals how to get

to Area 51 — to the perimeter. "Warning. Restricted Area," says the sign on the gate.

I could see the surveillance cameras swivelling this way and that on their stilts; I'd been told motion sensors were concealed in the Joshua trees and pressure detectors in the sand. But what really worried me was the line, in red paint in case I missed it, saying "Use of deadly force authorized."



STAR PHOTOS

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED: What lies behind the signs in Area 51? Some say there are flying saucers there.

Good James Bond stuff, I thought. But how do I get to speak to a guard? Should I boldly go where few men have gone before?

Still, the "deadly force" thing bothered me. So I decided the obvious answer, since I couldn't get to them, was to get them to come to me. "Photography in this area is prohibited," said another sign, so I began taking pictures, walking about as the video cameras followed me. "That'll bring a response from the security men," I thought.

I was wrong. No one appeared. But I didn't venture across the line.

"They wouldn't have shot you," said Clark when I rejoined him later. "But they'd certainly have arrested you if you'd gone in. Your film would have been confiscated, maybe your camera as well, and you'd have been fined \$600. It's an expensive lesson; no one strays in twice."

Clark and the other residents of Rachel, the closest town to Area 51, know that "something" is going on in the wasteland of scrub, cactus and sagebrush to the west. They've all seen enough strange sights through the years.

Many of these can be explained rationally. For instance, there are the flares, which visitors — the ones from this planet, that is — mistake for UFOs. And this is probably one of the areas where top-secret craft, such as the U-2 spy plane in the 1950s and the B-2 Stealth bomber in the '80s, were tested.

DEFY RATIONAL EXPLANATION

"In silhouette, or coming straight at you, the Stealth could easily be mistaken for a flying saucer," Clark concedes.

Still, there have been other sightings that defy rational explanation. And the tight security and the government's veil of silence only serve to fuel the rumors.

People claim they have spotted craft moving at tremendous speeds. One theory is that the so-called NASP is being tried out. NASP stands for National Aerospace Plane, a craft that, if it exists, is able to take off like a bullet from a super-long runway, fly into space and return to earth. (The main runway in Area 51 is said to be about 8 km long.)

But the most prevalent story — and one that was used in the blockbuster movie *Independence Day*, about an invasion of Earth by, that's right, creatures

from space — is that the military is testing captured flying saucers here.

Clark, 50, who moved here from California to write a book on astronomy, spends long nights out in the desert around Area 51 and he has seen some strange sights. "The most spectacular sighting occurred in February, 1995 when I saw a yellowish, pulsating disc in the sky. I thought at first it was a flare.

"It hovered about 30 ft. from the ground, then suddenly shot to the right at tremendous speed for about one and a half seconds, stopped cold for five seconds, then vanished.

"Next day, I measured the distance it had gone in that 1.5 seconds. It must have been travelling at 9,000 miles an hour!"

That means, he says, that it must have been a space ship, a craft piloted not by aliens but by earthlings. Clark, and many others, believe that — just like in *Independence Day* — the military is rebuilding crashed space ships. Clark calls it "reverse engineering": studying an advanced technology to convert it to current needs.

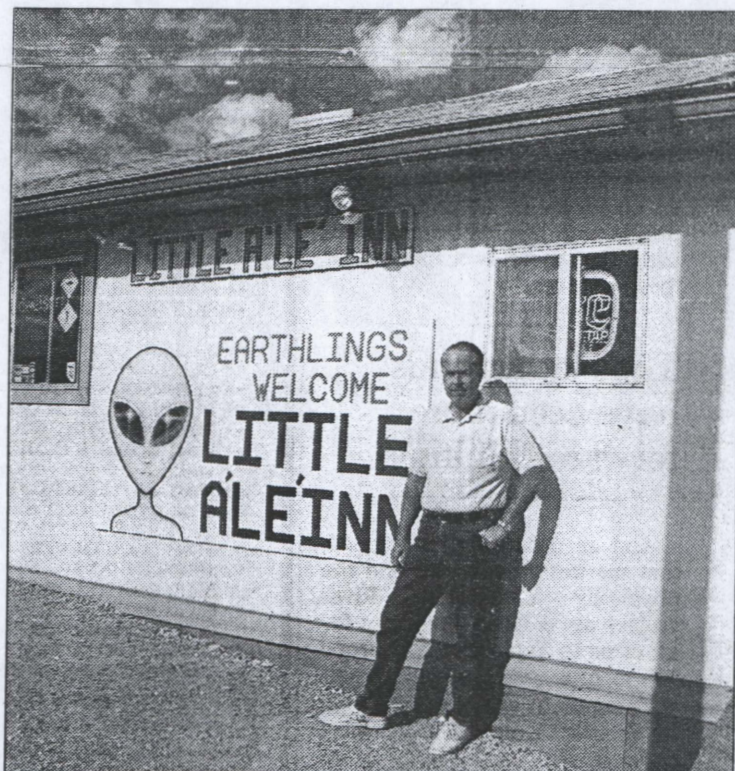
Adds Clark: "I'm a regular guy; I'm not a nut." And, for what it's worth, I have to put it on the record that he is a rational man, not one to "see" spacemen at every turn. In his 30-plus years of UFO-watching, he says he has experienced only six sightings "that I could not identify."

The theory that what is happening at Area 51 — or "Dreamland," as the locals call it — involves human attempts to fly alien ships, fits in with the claims made by Bob Lazar, who worked there as a physicist in the 1980s.

"I worked on a disc about 15 ft. high and 52 ft. in diameter," he said in a television interview. "It had the appearance of brushed stainless steel or brushed aluminum. Inside there were tiny seats — much too small to handle comfortably an average-size human. The craft's reactor was fuelled by an element not found on Earth. It was a copper orange color and extremely heavy."

Lazar, who has passed lie detector tests over his claims, also said he knew of nine UFOs that had come into America's hands.

Clark, for one, believes him. But he's more cynical on the question of reported alien abductions, the stuff of a thousand tabloid headlines. Says Clark:



STAR PHOTO

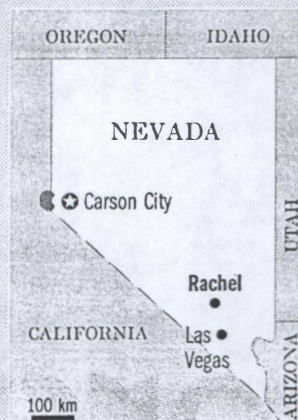
UFO WATCHER: Chuck Clark believes the military may be testing spacecraft, rebuilt after crash landings.

Guidepost

Rachel is in south-central Nevada. Canadians are most likely to visit it from Las Vegas, about three hours away. Drive east from Vegas on Interstate 15 to U.S. Highway 93, then north to State Route 375, the Extraterrestrial Highway, which you join just north of Alamo. From Alamo it's about 80 km to Rachel.

The Little A'Le'Inn's address is HCR 61, Box 45, Rachel, Nev. 89001; phone (702) 729-2515; Area 51 Handbook, by Chuck Clark, is available for \$15 U.S. plus postage. Clark can be contacted at HCR 61, Box 43, Rachel, Nev. 89001.

Make sure to collect at least two cash register receipts from some of the little towns in the region, and one receipt in Rachel. You can use them to join The ET Experience Association and receive newsletters.



Information: The Extraterrestrial Highway, Nevada Commission on Tourism, Capitol Complex, Carson City, Nev. 89710.

"Until I speak to someone who has seen an alien I won't believe it."

A much less rational UFOlogist, for my money, is Merlin Merlin, the self-styled "ambassador from the planet Draconis," who turns up every now and then at the Little A'Le'Inn ("little alien," get it?), the bar/restaurant in Rachel just 15 km from the edge of the base. □

STARFLEET COMMUNICATOR

Gadfly Merlin, 6 ft. 4 in. and bearded, claims to have been born on a flying saucer and you'll find him regularly talking into his starfleet communicator — which looks a lot like a cell phone — calling, he says, his emperor on the Mother Ship. (Cynics say he's really a guy called David Solomon, from California.)

Scientists moonstruck

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, Calif. (AP) — Scientists want to shoot the moon.

Using a missile to smash off a piece of icy crust from Jupiter's moon Europa, they hope to find a hidden ocean and perhaps even life.

Scientists from the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena are considering knocking chunks of the crust out into space for retrieval by a spacecraft and return to Earth.

The idea will be discussed at the San Juan Institute during a meeting of geologists, planetary scientists and exobiologists considering the potential for life on Europa.

"It's an inspired plan that could bring important clues about what might be the only other body in our solar system with an ocean," Doug Nash, the institute's director said.

The idea involves a space probe that would launch an unarmed missile into Europa, hurling pieces of the surface 50 km into space. Then it would use a gel to collect shards of ice as it streaked through the resulting debris cloud.

The probe would return the sample to Earth. The Galileo spacecraft is already exploring Jupiter and its moons.

The goings on around Area 51 have drawn UFO-watchers to Rachel for years and this year the state decided to cash in on the extraterrestrial interest and give the region a boost. It designated Route 375, the road that runs past the eastern boundary of the installation, "The Extraterrestrial Highway."

Rachel (population 100) is the only town on the 150-km long stretch of two-lane blacktop and the Little A'Le'Inn is the gathering place for locals and people who come here hoping to see things that go whoosh in the night.

The day I arrived, owners Joe and Pat Travis were getting ready to put up a new sign, especially for the hoped-for ET visitors. "Self Parking," it said, beneath a picture of a flying saucer.

Joe and Pat have got fully into the alien game. A sign at the door says "Welcome UFOs and Crews" and inside you can drink a "Beam me up, Scotty" cocktail (Jim Beam bourbon.

Scotch whisky and 7-Up) or munch on an "alien burger."

The visitors love it. You could say that with this and the lights in the sky, things are looking up in Rachel.

As well as the inn, the Travises run a seven-room motel and an RV park. The bar is decorated with all sorts of alien doodads — pennants, posters, a pa-

pier mâché head of a hollow-eyed being — and you can buy videos, T-shirts, books (including the *Area 51 Handbook*, by the aforementioned Chuck Clark) and other knick-knacks by the dozen. Photos of discs and other strange objects in the sky, many taken in this area, fill the walls.

CAR IGNITION FAILED

For Joe and Pat, this isn't just a gimmick. They are believers. Says Joe: "It's conceded to think we're the only ones in the universe. I have always kept an open mind about these things. We're a small grain of sand on a very large beach."

Pat became a convert one cold night in 1989. She was in the bar "when suddenly a 4-inch wide beam of light shot into the room through the centre of the back door. I felt there was something here, an energy, a presence."

Pat added: "I called out, 'Make yourself at home. You're welcome here. If you can come through that door you can open a can of beer. Help yourself.'"

Adds Rachel resident Pauline Croft: "This is a weird place."

She could be right. The second evening I was in the Inn bar a visitor came in and announced that his car ignition had failed on the hill coming down the ET Highway from the Queen City summit. "My lights went on and off and the engine sputtered," he said.

"It happens all the time. Something sucks the energy right out of the battery," said a local. "You've just had a Close Encounter of the Second Kind."

Most of the civilian workers in Dreamland — about 1,500, according to Clark and other close observers — are flown in every day from Las Vegas in a fleet of Boeing 737s and sometimes some of them stay over in the area. A man drinking in the little A'Le'Inn one night admitted that he worked in the tunnel city. "Can you tell me what goes on there?" a local asked him.

"I could tell you," said the worker.

"But then I'd have to kill you."

He was just kidding. Wasn't he?

THE TORONTO STAR Saturday, November 16, 1996

THE TORONTO STAR Thursday, November 7, 1996

Test kits detect alien pregnancy

LONDON (Reuters) — The past year has been a strange one for many people, with Hindu icons guzzling India's milk supplies and sheep found dangling from trees in New Zealand.

Britain's *Fortean Times*, an annual chronicle of weird happenings published this week, includes a back page ad for a testing kit for women who fear they have been impregnated by aliens.

The 1996 edition said Puerto Rican authorities are hunting a "fanged, kangaroo-like entity with bulging red eyes and spines" blamed for the bloody deaths of hundreds of farm animals.

Meanwhile, the men of Zanzibar live in fear of a huge, bat-like creature with one eye, which swoops into their houses at night and rapes them.

There's the tale of a prudish ghost who drove a married couple to making love in a tent in their garden because it let out howls of protest whenever they got pas-

sionate in the bedroom.

The book says that silicone breast implants offer a useful benefit, after hearing of a Florida stripper whose fake breasts saved her life by deflecting a bullet fired from the audience.

Milk supplies ran out in much of northern India after the god Ganesh was said to have taken to drinking it and the Hindu faithful gathered to feed spoonful after spoonful to the icons.

New Zealanders were baffled when dozens of sheep were found dangling in a forest 30 metres from the ground. A pilot later admitted they had fallen from his helicopter.

A dog in the Czech republic saved human lives by peeing on a plastic explosive bomb left in a shop doorway.

A sadder tale is that of the dog in Nepal which committed suicide by throwing itself into a pond three days after his 12-year-old master drowned.

'Lost' spies in sky may still be on job

LONDON (Reuters) — Four U.S. spy satellites "missing" since 1990 may have been moved into slower, secret orbits to carry on covert duties without being tracked, *New Scientist* reports.

Their disappearances have been noticed by a band of enthusiastic hobbyists, the magazine says, who track satellites by monitoring their positions in the night sky, then use computers to reconstruct their orbits.

From Toronto, Ted Molczan monitored three of the satellites from their 1990 launch at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. All three disappeared after several weeks in initial orbits.



WAITING FOR E.T.: Joe and Pat Travis are ready to welcome UFOs, but there's no valet parking.

U.S. Air Force may be going sci-fi

Plan has robot attack planes, killer laser beams

BY RICHARD SISK
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Air Force could morph into the Space and Air Force under a strategic plan to win the next century's wars.

The sci-fi-like Space and Air Force would feature robot attack planes, killer laser beams and sophisticated weapons systems expected to be able to hit any target anywhere on Earth.

It also could win the perennial fight with the other armed services for shrinking defence dollars.

The flight service is on a path of change "from an air force into an air and space force on an evolutionary path to a space and air force," Air Force Secretary Sheila Widnall said.

Widnall's comments came as

she outlined the plan called "Global Engagement: A Vision for the 21st Century Air Force."

Global Engagement foresees new generations of robot-operated unmanned air vehicles for surveillance and pinpoint strikes at enemy forces, together with orbiting spy satellites for weapons guidance and communication, and airborne lasers to zap incoming ballistic missiles.

The new technology would "offer an alternative to the kind of military operation that pits large numbers of young Americans against an adversary in brute, force-on-force conflicts," the air force plan said.

Defence analysts viewed that statement as a warm-up shot at the army, navy and marines in preparation for next year's battle for long-range budgets in the Quadrennial Defence Review by U.S. Congress.

"All the services are positioning themselves to try to walk away from that review with the biggest share of the money," said industry consultant Loren

Thompson.

The other services will weigh in shortly with their own plans, as "everybody scrambles to insure that they come up with a mission justification for their weapons," said retired army Col. Dan Smith at the Centre for Defence Information.

"The service rivalries are more intense now because, supposedly, the defence budgets are going to be cut," Smith said. The current budget range is \$250 billion to \$270 billion (U.S.), he said.

Widnall called the dominance of space envisioned under Global Engagement as revolutionary for warfare "as the invention of gunpowder or the Manhattan Project," which produced the first atomic bomb.

The goal is "to build the ability to detect, track and eventually target anything on the surface of the Earth," she said.

The air force has given a \$1.1 billion contract to a joint venture of Lockheed Martin, Boeing and the TRW Corp. to develop

an attack laser aircraft.

The plane would be a modified Boeing 747 with a particle laser gun mounted in the nose to destroy enemy ballistic missiles with high-energy beams of light at ranges up to 480 kilometres.

If the project is successful, the air force would buy seven more of the laser aircraft after the year 2003 at a cost of another \$6 billion.

But Thompson pointed to the enormous technical problems that must be overcome in building a laser more powerful than any now in existence.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

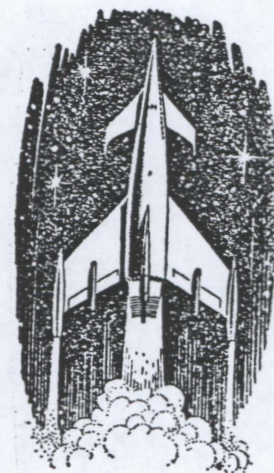
TORONTO STAR Wednesday, January 8, 1997

Green light gives Italy UFO fever

ROME (Reuters) — Italy indulged in a bout of UFO fever yesterday after witnesses reported seeing a strange green light from a luminous sphere flash through the evening sky near Rome's main airport.

Air traffic controllers said Monday's sighting was probably an optical illusion.

The light failed to register on radar screens. Police investigated but found nothing on the ground.



THE PLAIN DEALER • INTERNATIONAL • SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1996

Scientist warns of machines taking control

By CLIVE COOKSON
FINANCIAL TIMES

BIRMINGHAM, England — People will inevitably become the servants of intelligent machines "that have almost complete control of our lives," a gathering of international scientists heard Thursday.

Roland Burns, who heads a research team developing intelligent machines at Plymouth University in Britain, predicted that early in the next century, humanity would be totally dependent on computers at work, home and traveling between the two.

"Before long, every vehicle will be fitted with a Global Positioning System receiver, making its position known to local area traffic management systems," he told the British Association conference in Birmingham, meeting to consider issues on the advancement of science.

"These systems will control traffic lights and diversions to optimize traffic density and will ultimately have control over the vehicles themselves."

For the home, Burns predicted a financial and stock control system that would automatically order food and groceries when necessary. A dietary supervision system would organize varied daily meals — ensuring everyone ate the right balance of calories and nutrients according to age, weight and genetic makeup — and would tell the kitchen system to take food from the refrigerator or freezer, cook and serve it at the right time.

"The danger is that once we have machines that can reason without emotion, they can outstrip us," he said.

Software faults might cause disastrous malfunctions in the machines on which civilized life depended.

More menacingly, intelligent machines might "decide" that they knew what was best for you — or even what was best for them.

An extreme example of what Burns feared would be the household system deciding that it would be more efficient not to order any more food — and shutting the doors on you.

Another vision was the intelligent fridge that refused to let you have a candy bar when you sneaked into the kitchen for a midnight snack.

Burns, whose own research group is working on projects ranging from an artificial hand to an intelligent autopilot for ships, said there was probably little that humanity could do to prevent the machines taking over.

"It's more or less inevitable," he said. "Business and science will drive this to the utmost."